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OUR CONTEMPORARIES

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OUR CONTEMPORARIES

THOUGHTS AND SENTIMENTS OF THE REVEREND GEORGE A. GORDON, D. D. CONTRIBUTED BY HIM TO THE CELEBRATION OF THE TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS INSTALLATION AS MINISTER OF THE OLD SOUTH CHURCH BOSTON, APRIL MCMIX

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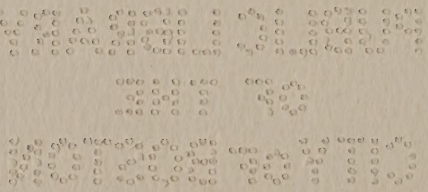

TO THE MEN AND THE WOMEN AND THE CHILDREN WHOSE
NAMES ARE INSCRIBED IN THE PRECIOUS VOLUME
PRESENTED TO ME ON THE TWENTY-FIFTH
ANNIVERSARY OF MY INSTALLATION AS
MINISTER OF THE OLD SOUTH CHURCH
IN BOSTON, I DEDICATE THIS
EDITION OF THE THOUGHTS
AND SENTIMENTS CALLED
FORTH FROM ME ON
THAT HAPPY
OCCASION
G· A· G·

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MY FRIEND

WHO is my Friend? The man with vision high
Of utmost good for man, and self-subdued
To service of the same, with soul imbued
In sympathies benign; the beaming eye
With honor bright, and overhead the sky
Of Faith serene and vast; the goal pursued
With steadfast step; the heart that will not lie.
Who is my Friend? The Life that side by side
Marches with mine, that feels the wildness near;
That weakness in me knows and doth not chide;
My Brother in this night of time and fear,
Who loves me in my sore defeat; my guide
To victory; comrade in battle's role!
Howe'er I fare, the other of my soul.

[*In response to a request for an autograph and a sentiment for the Menu of the Anniversary Dinner Dr. Gordon wrote the sonnet "My Friend."*]

My Friend.

Who is my Friend? The man with vision high
Of utmost good for man, and self-subdued
To service of the same, with soul imbued
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Who loves me in my sore defeat, my guide
To victory; Comrade in battle's roar!
Hours I fare, the other of my soul.

George H. Gordon

PRAYER

THIS PRAYER PRECEDED THE ANNIVERSARY SERMON ON SUNDAY MORNING, 4 APRIL, 1909

PRAYER

ETERNAL FATHER, Ancient of Days, Infinite Watcher of men, whose vision is the austere and benign vision of perfect love, we, the children of thy love on our pilgrimage through time, resting here by the way, would praise thee and renew our being from thine, O Perfect Grace and Perfect Truth. We behold, our Father, the generations and the races of men from the morning of the world until now, appearing in the light of thy day, toiling for a few hours in the fields of time, and passing with thy light still upon them under the shadow of death. We behold those who opposed thy will and whom thou didst convince of righteousness through their sin, and we have hope for them. We behold those who through ignorance and unbelief fell by the way, and we look with compassion upon them. We behold those who knew thy will and did it, took the wages thou didst appoint them and were content, who made the world beautiful with their brave and lovely lives and passed at length with the light of thy face on their brow to meet thee in the awe and greatness of thy eternal world. We see again, our Father, the seven generations of thy people who have served thy kingdom through this church — preachers and their people, ministers and servants

together of the cause of Christ — and we thank thee for their faith, their love, their service and their hope. We see again those with whom we have served here — perhaps bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh; and if not bound to us by the ties of the flesh, bound to us by the greater ties of the spirit. We think of them and their finished work and their peace in thy presence this morning. O Father, bring to bear upon us now the whole of thy hallowed eternity and touch the moments as they fly with depth, with dignity, with austere beauty, fill them with contentment and devotion to thy will; make them moments so full of thy Holy Spirit that all the days that are appointed for us may be better days.

We thank thee for the years that are in our memory to-day; for the fellowship of lives together in this church, in faith, in service, in discipline, in pain, in joy, and in unlimited hope. We thank thee for the enrichment that has come to us in our fellowship one with another — the deeper respect as we have known each other better, the profounder consideration, the richer and finer sympathy, the loftier regard. We thank thee that through our life together thou hast revealed thyself in thy Son, and us one to the other. And we bless thee that we may hope for other days still of such fellowship and service. We commend to thy care, in Christian faith and in dear regard, the persons, the souls, the families of this church and congregation.

Oh, be with us in our inmost life; give us that

love, divine and human, without which our existence is poor and miserable. We thank thee for the treasure thou hast given us in our homes. Keep it from sordidness; keep it from becoming common under the evil custom of the world; keep it fresh and clean and dear, and make it more and more beautiful; make our inmost hearts faithful in those homes and ever more grateful; and cause them to bloom, especially at this springtime, cause them to bloom anew with graces —the unfading graces of thy Spirit. May all our possessions in human friendship and in our human homes be hallowed by the thought that they are ours only for a little while — till death us do part. And may we so live and so hold our treasure now and here, serve with such large and disinterested minds, such brave and such good wills, stand so high and trustful in thy compassion that when we are borne through death into that glorious life beyond, we shall meet again in greater love and vaster service.

Hear our prayer for the dead. May we feel the sanctity and awe of their presence now. May we be richer and loftier because of our assurance of their sympathy and perpetual compassion. Hear our prayer for all the interests that are dear to the disciples of Christ: our city, our Commonwealth; our whole human race. Be with all peoples and all governments; be with thy servant, the President of the United States, and all with him in authority. Continue to guide us, O God, and may thy ministers, the ministers of the Gospel of Christ, be so wise, so pure-hearted, so

clean-handed and so brave that they shall speak in concert and with might the things that concern the kingdom of God in the nation and be heard by the people with gladness. Continue with us while we wait upon thee this hour. Hear the prayer that cannot be spoken; record for us the significance of the memories that cannot be uttered—the flood of life within us, deep, happy, ineffable. And answer our life out of thy greatness, and bring us together into the vision and peace of Jesus Christ, our Lord, in whose Name we offer our prayer, Amen.

SERMON

THIS SERMON WAS PREACHED BY DR. GORDON IN THE
OLD SOUTH CHURCH AT THE MORNING SERVICE,
4 APRIL, 1909

OUR CONTEMPORARIES

"Others have labored, and ye are entered into their labor."
— John iv. 38.

IN the fields of the spirit sowing and reaping go on together; we reap what others have sown; we sow what others shall reap. In any generation of men independence is always wanting, completeness is never present. The generations stand to one another in a vast solidarity; every great idea, every noble enterprise has a history. Tradition is a splendid word degraded in the ignoble custom of the world. Fire has been put out by a line of men running from the flames down to the river from which pails of water were drawn and passed from man to man till poured by the last man upon the conflagration. Such handing onward, such passing down, such tradition from generation to generation is essential to the continuance of civilized society. Human life is itself the great tradition; it is handed down through parenthood; and when the parenthood is worthy the tradition is divine. All our best ideas upon all subjects are an inheritance and an expansion. When at our best we make clearer and completer what we have received, we

pass on to those who shall come after us a world of thought in its infancy to be raised to maturity and power. In this vast tradition we stand in a threefold order, as predecessors, as contemporaries, as successors. We who are here to-day are successors to those who preceded us; we are predecessors to those who shall by and by occupy our places; we are contemporaries in possession of our world for a few great hours.

On this significant day I am to speak to you as contemporaries of one another, older and younger indeed, but together sharing the privilege of human existence, moral service and Christian faith.

1. Good contemporaries do not fail in affectionate veneration for the past in so far as it has been great; they do not fail in pity and sorrow for it in so far as it has been mean. Noble spirits like to rehearse the story of the heroism of other times; they dwell with pleasure upon the mighty thoughts and deeds of those who were of old; they love to renew the memory of the gracious and valiant past, to paint upon the canvas of to-day the faces of the brave men and the beautiful women of yesterday. It is part of the high privilege of existence to renew together the vision of the thinker and doer, the poet and prophet, the ruler and reformer who wrought to redeem our world. When I was a lad working on a farm there stood in the background of the land-

scape a shapely and lofty hill. Much of the time I was too busy to see it, much of the time it could not be seen owing to cloud and storm; but now and then it rose up in some great sunset in such beauty and majesty that I was constrained to look at it and to love it. I recall, too, many a time walking a mile that I might look upon it at a certain angle, that I might see it at its best. Gradually the feeling grew within me that whether I saw it or not, I knew it was there, the great, dark, stable background of my life, the meeting place of earth and sky, the fountain of refreshment for the fields spread out between it and the sea, the center of wonder and love. So our noble predecessors appear. They are the background of our existence. We are too much absorbed to think of them often; we are imprisoned in the grave interests of the present; but now and then we have leisure to pause, to lift our eyes to the hills whence our lives have descended, to stand for a few great moments in the vision of the mighty of the generations that have gone before, as of endless mountain ranges, whose far-soaring summits are transfigured in the glow that sometimes falls upon them out of heaven. At such times we know that without that past we should be nothing; without it we should be bereaved of our greatest teachers, our wisest leaders, of the world which they made habitable, fruitful, and beautiful for us.

Within this vaster world of historic man, as a circle narrow but precious within the mighty circumference of the ages of the great and good, we recall the background of this church. We think of the fifteen ministers of the church who in various ways and in different measures served it, and who left no stain upon its fair name. Their names are graven on yonder tablet, dim but precious, and in the dim religious light of this edifice, still drawing our thoughts to highest things, and hallowing our rich humanities out of the heaven in which they live. We think of Franklin and Sewall and Samuel Adams, typical of hundreds less eminent but equally worthy, who are forever associated with this church. We think of a nameless multitude, like a vast white cloud rising in the field of vision, glorious in light and purity, men and women who saw here the heavenly vision, who through a thousand discouragements pursued it, who found it their inspiration in life and their hope in death. We turn to that precious past in grateful honor; we confess with delight that we reap what we did not sow; that as we bring our sheaves with us we think with affectionate veneration of the seven generations of the noble and wise who went forth weeping bearing precious seed, casting it abroad in this community in a sublime vision of the future. Our harvest is first of all in their honor; if this were a banquet instead of

a sermon we should rise and salute them in silent, immortal honor.

2. Good contemporaries do not fail in solicitude for their successors. On this I need not dwell. The anxiety of all noble parenthood relates to the future of the children when the world shall be theirs, and when no father or mother shall be present as a shield against evil and pain. All wise men live out of the future no less than out of the past. The state of the world as they inherit it is not ideal; they desire to bequeath it in a better condition than they found it. For this world is like an entailed estate. We receive it from our predecessors, here wonderfully improved and there dismally impoverished; and when we are great enough in character we wish to add to the improvements others of our own; and to undo the work of the prodigal and villain. It is part of the privilege of existence to be concerned about the state of the world as inherited by our successors. Our interest in industrial and social reform, in our schools and colleges, in all forms of education, in the total higher character of our city, our commonwealth and country, in religious faith and religious service, is a heart interest in the coming generation of Americans. Our obligation to the future is vast and solemn; with the vision of the City of God in our eyes we would work for the Americans that are to be. And as we thus work we say in the

great words of Webster, "Advance, then, ye future generations! We would hail you, as you rise in your long succession, to fill the places which we now fill, and to taste the blessings of existence where we are passing, and soon shall have passed, our own human duration. We bid you welcome to this pleasant land of the fathers. We greet your accession to the great inheritance which we have enjoyed. We welcome you to the blessings of good government and religious liberty. We welcome you to the treasures of science and the delights of learning. We welcome you to the transcendent sweets of domestic life, to the happiness of kindred and parents and children. We welcome you to the immeasurable blessings of rational existence, the immortal hope of Christianity and the light of everlasting truth."

3. After we have suitably honored those who went before us, and tenderly greeted those who shall come after us, it is permissible to dwell for a few moments on our contemporaries. And here it must be admitted that now and then our contemporaries appear a queer lot, in the expressive phrase of Burns, "an unco squad." There is profound and incessant competition among us; there is grave misunderstanding; occasionally there is malice. In cases of transcendent genius or when genius is born out of due season, the hostility of the human environment sometimes

becomes tragic. Here we think of poets like Milton and Dante, reformers like Ridley and Latimer, prophets like Savanarola and Hus, the Christian apostles and their divine Master. In such instances the contemporary world in its leading class is woefully blind and cruel; and the man of genius is compelled to appeal to the supreme court of the future. It is necessary, in such high examples, to call upon coming time to redress the wrongs done by the present time, to intrust one's cause and one's good name to the manhood of the future where the present generation has been so woefully unjust. The world and the ages is the supreme court of appeal; it is forever open to misunderstood, misrepresented, persecuted, and assassinated genius and goodness.

On the whole, for the average servant of his time, I look with gratitude upon the severities of the human environment. To serve the present age is all that our Maker requires of most men. If we fail to do good now, it is futile to expect that we shall do good to any future generation. And in qualifying us for service here and now, the severities of our human environment are essential. People sometimes sigh over the fact that the Garden of Eden had a forbidden tree in it, and a serpent; I think if there had been a hundred forbidden trees in it, mixed with the other trees, and serpents hissing from every bush, Adam and Eve might have fared better. The

universal hostility might have called into being keen and sleepless vigilance and a moral caution always on duty. As I read the tragic story of human failure, I find that it proceeds from a fancied security seemingly warranted by the general friendly aspect of the environment. It takes but one lion or tiger in a jungle to kill the unwary traveler; and if he were told that he must be armed for an encounter with many wild beasts, his chances of escape might be better. Among preachers this is surely true. The human environment is apt to be too friendly, especially in their youth. The people assume that these preachers are wonderfully good, wonderfully gifted; some of the people speak of them as if they were saints. In such heavenly love abiding the young preacher is apt to neglect profound and systematic study; he is apt to think lightly of carefully prepared courses of thought; he is apt to become extempore in intellect, in character, and in service; and an extempore teacher and preacher of religion, in the exact sense of the word, is on the way to perdition with his devoted people following hard after him.

I give thanks to-day that I was called to a work greater than the powers with which I came to it, that I saw from the first that if I were ever to equal my task it must be by continuous growth. I give thanks for the general suspicion of my ability, for the widespread sense of doubt concern-

ing the character of my message. I give thanks for the outspoken opposition to my views and purposes on the part of strong and brave men. I felt that I had come to live among men who had convictions, who had the courage to express these convictions, and to stand by them when it was unpopular so to do. I now give thanks that a large minority voted against my installation as minister of this church, that these men gave steady utterance to their distrust of me, that for eight years after my settlement here, I could appear as a speaker in my own denomination nowhere without meeting a chill as from the regions of eternal ice. I give thanks to-day and with the utmost sincerity and solemnity for the intrinsic difficulty of my task, made tenfold more difficult by the atmosphere charged as it was with intense and enduring hostility.

The reasons for my thanksgiving are easily stated. I knew that I had to prepare for battle, that the battle was to be a campaign. I knew that there must be no trifling. Whatever of capacity lay in me, as thinker, as preacher, as friend to the human soul, as man, was needed in this contest. I must revere and cherish every possibility; I must seek through long years of diligence and honor the realization of power. To do anything else would render defeat and disaster inevitable. And if the result is far less than it might have been, it is much more and higher than it

would have been had not the severe humanities of my environment created vigilance, self-control, and filled the solitudes of existence with divine companionship and protection. Woe to you, young man, when all men speak well of you. You are a mollusk and not a man; and if you are a man still without prodigious care, that atmosphere of adulation will surely convert you into a jelly-fish. When Solomon was going down hill, the Lord raised up an adversary against him; and when that did no good, still another adversary was divinely raised up. Even the wrath and malice of our contemporaries may become help from on high, as a headwind at sea serves to keep the great steamer's furnaces going at full blast; and the adverse opinions and influence of noble men are a divine force in the evolution of a just, sane, responsible manhood.

There is room in the human environment for the benign no less than the severe. The mother's caress is always in order, the father's word of love and hope is never out of place; because the world may be confidently relied upon to administer the antidote. The home with its endearment, expectation, and abounding love is a precious qualification of an otherwise too severe environment; it is like the flood of June sunshine that tempers the strong east wind into a pleasant and wholesome servant of life. There is room for our friends, and all their exaggeration of our

power and our worth. Their glorious confidence, their shining affection, and their warm hope make the atmosphere of our lives a delight and an incentive.

Here again I give thanks. The men and women who called me to become minister of this church were one and all friends. The members of the joint-committee of the church and of the society who presented the call, only one of whom survives to this day, gave me steadfast support. When I was received into the church on Friday evening, March 7, 1884, the welcome I received was profoundly moving; and it was prophetic. Brave men and beautiful women came forward and gave me the right-hand of fellowship, a hand withdrawn only in death. The adverse feeling in the Council only stirred to a greater depth the loyalty and devotion of my people. Following upon the first Sunday came a Tuesday evening reception. Such functions have not for me an exaggerated fascination; but the vision that came to me and that brightened forever that evening has remained, and will remain, a heavenly vision. I saw a company of youth, supported by their parents and kindred, to whom it was to be the privilege of my existence to bring the divine illumination and transfiguration. After this beginning in storm and friendship and romance, came the long, hard, laborious years. I can think of nothing finer than the wise support, the noble

friendship, the patient confidence, and the continuous inspiration of hope that came to me from the generation that called me to service here. The names of the leaders of the church in those trying days are engraven in grateful and everlasting memory:

"Again ye come, ye hovering Forms! I find ye,
As early to my clouded sight ye shone!
Shall I attempt, this once, to seize and bind ye?
Still o'er my heart is that illusion thrown?
Ye crowd more near! Then, be the reign assigned ye,
And sway me from your misty, shadowy zone!
My bosom thrills, with youthful passion shaken,
From magic airs that sound your march awaken."

"Of joyous days ye bring the blissful vision,
The dear, familiar phantoms rise again,
And like an old and half-extinct tradition,
First Love returns, with Friendship in his train."

I have always gone my way in reliance upon the American humorist's beatitude, "Blessed are they that expect nothing, for they shall not be disappointed." I confess to a good deal of uneasiness as to how I was to fare with the next generation of my people. I knew my noble, my incomparable friends who called me could not live forever. They were in duty bound to stand by me. Would their sons and daughters and those coming in from the outside recognize the obligation? It seemed to me extremely doubtful. Imagine my surprise, therefore, and my delight, when I found the general average of

ability in the second generation higher than the first; the devotion to the church equal in self-sacrifice and intensity, and the kindness to me augmented by the consciousness that I had been the minister and friend of their fathers. I have not yet recovered from this noble surprise, nor shall I ever cease to be grateful for it. Instead of the fathers we have the children; and the children in devotion to the kingdom of God, and to this church as a servant of that kingdom are worthy of the fathers; and their friendship for me is an apostolic succession for which I continue to give thanks.

Many have come to us from other religious communities. They have brought with them inexpressible additions to our power, our richness of life, our friendship, our fellowship and happiness. The church has adopted them without let or hindrance, counted them among the faithful, and in no case has that confidence been dishonored; in many instances it has been rewarded with service as signal, and love as great, as any church could well receive. They have brought with them honor for those older in service here than themselves, and for the descendants of older servants still; they have aided us in the strongest wish of our hearts that we might hold the Old South Church to the great ideal of democracy. This church has been, more than any other, identified in past times with the life of the city of

Boston; and we, in our generation, desire to hold the church as the church of the people.

I am now face to face with another serious question. Am I to gain the love of the children's children? To them I have come down from a former generation; to them I must seem one of the surviving charter members of the Old South Church. Indeed, we all recall how men far on in the fifties seemed to us when we were where our children are. Did they not appear as part of the original framework of the world? Did we not ponder the question with some anxiety, How can they find their way in this new world, so touched with romance, entrancing light, and hope in which we dwell? I do not wonder at this question when it concerns myself. I am sure of this, that I can gain access to these prophetic minds, aid you in moulding their character, introduce them to the kingdom of the soul only through your devout sympathy. Your fathers moulded your minds in respect and confidence toward me; your homes, while centers of freedom, were full not of criticism but of gracious commendation of my ideals and endeavors; you were bred in reverence for this church and in friendship for its minister; and thus through the precious sympathy of your parents I was able to gain access to your thoughts and a place in your enduring esteem.

Here is one form of the great, continuous de-

pendence of the preacher. He and his people together make what is called his ministry; that total ministry is the product of the preacher's action on his people, and of the reaction of the people upon the preacher. This reaction of my people upon me I regard as one of the chief educational forces of my life. In the light of this experience I contend that the preacher depends upon the gracious Christian homes of his congregation, upon the high dispositions of fathers and mothers, upon the atmosphere which they create and which their children breathe concerning the church and the ideals and endeavors of the minister. With this sacred service rendered by you, as your parents rendered it to you, I do not yet see why the children's children should not be among my best friends.

Tell them, therefore, that my sympathies are with the childhood and youth of the world; that I care most to say those things which shall enrich and illumine their existence, open before it vistas of noble power and joy, lend to it steadiness and self-control in the day of battle, set it more securely in the possession of essential good, interfuse with the passion for time the transfiguring sense of the majesty of the Unseen, attach it in all tender and enduring strength to its best friends, show it the glory and the delight of Christian discipleship, and ground it in the consciousness of the dear, abiding love of the God and Father of men.

The benignity and the hostility of the immediate environment recall the same forces at work in the world-environment, especially during the last fifty years. We have been living in a free world; in this atmosphere of freedom men have spoken their honest thought about the universe and about all phases of human existence. Never before on so wide a scale have reality and frankness characterized the intellectual life of civilized man. All established beliefs have been called in question. We have had atheism, agnosticism, naturalism, pessimism, the terrestrial life of man as his only life advocated with great ability and complete sincerity. Haeckel, Huxley, Darwin, and hundreds of others less eminent, but equally confident, have written in revolt from the ancient belief in the spirituality of man and his universe. On the other hand, German idealism has risen up in prevailing protest against the degradation of the human spirit. The British disciples of Hegel, especially Green, Wallace, and Caird, have contended for man and man's world in a great and conclusive way. The scientific spirit has gone everywhere; it has sought facts, sifted them, weighed them, considered what deductions they could honestly be made to bear. History has been largely rewritten; the scientific history of the religions of the world is a new thing under the sun. The Bible and the scientific historian have met, and again vast changes have followed.

Scientists have become philosophers and divided into opposing camps, one set including man in the order of animal existence and finding in his universe a soulless mechanism of matter and force; another set finding eternal spirit everywhere, working in the cosmos and living and breathing in the human soul. Here is our Gog and Magog, our intellectual battlefield with two armies face to face, and in tremendous conflict. We note that truth is on both sides the final attachment, the last and best inspiration. We confess on both sides intellectual power, sincerity, character; and we ask how should one think of one's contemporaries in this world-environment?

For myself I give thanks. One great deliverance is at hand; the sham-thinker, the sham-believer is going; the reality of existence is asserting itself, the supreme worth of reality is gaining vaster sway. Truth is the quest of all honest men; and even when honest men are mistaken in the main errand, the sacred toil through which they pass to their error gives them character out of the Eternal Spirit. The Civil War is a symbol of the nineteenth century. The South fought the North on a mistake; it fought with complete honesty and with unsurpassed valor and sacrifice; it was defeated; the cause was a lost cause; but the tremendous toil, the sacred sacrifice through which it passed conferred upon our brothers in defeat a character

that has become part of the strength and treasure of the nation. Here in symbol is the intellectual war of this age. The atheists, agnostics, naturalists, pessimists of our time are generally honest and able men. They love the truth as devoutly as we do. They fight for it as gallantly and they suffer for it as gladly as do their opponents. They are mistaken; they are hurled back in defeat, upon every fresh assault, by the mass and weight of the religious soul of the world. Yet their fight is not vain; they compel men to think, to renew their love of truth, to discern between convention and reality, to distinguish essential from unessential, to clear the divine habit of the soul from the foolish and often wicked customs that have grown round it, to admit new light, to undertake revision of sacred books and philosophies of faith, to retreat upon the Eternal God and to come forth mailed in his strength for the day of battle. These negative thinkers have done this service and much more; at the same time they have won a character that has become a new glory in our human world. They are in defeat; they are bound to be in defeat; yet in their souls they have won the best things in this earth, clean hands and a pure heart; and they have compelled us to win our fight and to broaden our victory so that it shall include them.

The successive generations of honest and noble men are like different pieces of rare tapestry.

The background looks dull, but we know it is essential, and we make it together out of the gray, monotonous fidelities of our fellowship. The figures are brilliant and fine, and again they are woven of the threads dyed in the rich colors of the common heart. This creation of beauty and worth is by our contemporaries; the contrasts, too, have their place here, the differences and oppositions; set in with the harmonies and controlled by the spirit of ideal unity, that unity which builds into its fair design all reality and all sincerity, they are seen to be essential to the completeness of the work. This complete work of grace and worth is the work of our contemporaries; hence our supreme regard for them. They and we are sister threads in the same pattern; they and we are woven together in the same design; they and we are together background, figure, fire, and joy; they and we are together harmony, contrast, peace, conflict, light, shadow, splendor, and gloom; our existence for better for worse, for richer for poorer, till death us do part, is bound into one. And this it is that makes the contemporary world so great and so precious to the large-minded and generous individual human being.

When we think of the end, as we are more and more bound to do, we must often wonder over the strange world into which we shall emerge from death. Going as we do from our friends

here, passing from a world that the better we have served it the more we have loved it, into a region unknown, shall we find awaiting us men and women who shall take away the strangeness and the loneliness of that mysterious realm? We hope to make the solitary and wild journey in the happy consciousness, "I will fear no evil for thou art with me," and in the realization of the great promise, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise"; and yet do we not long for household voices and vanished smiles to greet us there? I think that in heaven we shall not feel quite at home till we stand encircled by our contemporaries who have preceded us to the world of light, whose comradeship on earth again renewed shall add new zest to the regions of bliss, whose friendly offices will be greatly appreciated by the bewildered stranger, whose gracious influence will be to us when we awaken from the stupor of death like a mother's reassuring voice when as children we awoke from some wild dream in fear and pain. As the world into which we awoke in panic was our mother's work and therefore one of peace, so the world upon which we open our vision beyond death will be that of friends, fellow-servants, contemporaries, and therefore one with the notes of welcome, good cheer, high memory, and divine regard forever ringing in it; and our God will greet us there as here, through our kind, through our kindred, through the eyes and the voices of

dear familiar souls, through the sacred order and
light of those with whom we stood,
toiled, suffered, and rejoiced
in the kingdom of love
in time.

PRAYER

THIS PRAYER FOLLOWED THE ANNIVERSARY SERMON ON SUNDAY MORNING, 4 APRIL, 1909

INFINITE FATHER, Lord God of our fathers and of our brothers who have served with us here, we look backward with regret and with gratitude: with regret that we have served thee so ill—with gratitude that thy grace has abounded and still wrought through us for light and for joy. We look backward to a great, silent, inalienable, and immortal possession. Put it this day forever within our hearts. O that silent and beautiful kingdom in which we see fair and lovely lives moving without sound, with the light upon them that comes from thy approving face and thy joy in them! May that kingdom never depart from us.

Bless thy people here, and through the tender and noble sympathy of this hour make us more generous and lofty-minded men and women, and whatever be thy appointment for us in the days to come, give us strength to lean upon thy wisdom and walk in the way of thy commandment, and to surrender our powers to thee so that through their use thy love and thy pity may come and abide with men.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore, Amen.

HYMN

THIS HYMN, "YEARS AND ASPIRATIONS," WAS WRITTEN BY DR. GORDON FOR THE ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION, AND WAS SUNG TO THE TUNE "ST. BEES" BY THE CHOIR AND THE CONGREGATION AT THE MORNING SERVICE, SUNDAY, 4 APRIL, 1909, AND ALSO AT THE PUBLIC MEETING, MONDAY EVENING, 12 APRIL, 1909

YEARS AND ASPIRATIONS

LEAD me, Lord, through all my days,
In Thy great and wondrous ways,
Lift my heart to grander hours,
Hold me with Thy heavenly powers.

Of the Past may I still keep
Things divine both high and deep,
Morning light and evening glow
That have ever blessed me so.

Memories that ever shine;
Friends unseen but friends still mine;
Service sweet in high reward;
Spirits blest in dear regard.

Tender sympathies and tears,
Precious store of noble years;
Visions wide on pathways wild,
Chastened thought again a child!

Trust in Thee that surer grows;
Human love that fears no foes;
Faith that to Thy heart belong
Worlds now lost in woe and wrong.

Show me, Lord, Thy word of grace—
Christ, Thy glory in his face;
That I through my fleeting hour,
Serve Thy kingdom in Thy power.

ADDRESS

THIS ADDRESS WAS DR. GORDON'S RESPONSE TO THE TRIBUTES PAID TO HIM BY THE PRECEDING SPEAKERS AT THE ANNIVERSARY DINNER GIVEN TO HIM BY THE OLD SOUTH CLUB AT HOTEL SOMERSET, 15 APRIL, 1909

ADDRESS

Mr. Justice Hammond, Fellow Members of the Old South Club, Guests of the Old South Church, and Ladies:

THERE is a premonitory significance in this meeting, as if it were a rehearsal of a coming professional funeral. I have myself frequently assisted at similar obsequies during the last twenty-five years, and now my time has come, as it comes to all. On such occasions I have invariably tried to tell the truth, and while I must confess that I have here and there strained a virtue or an excellence, I have cherished the hope that I might be forgiven because of the tender humanity of my motive. In the proceedings of this evening I see a similar elevation of purpose, an equal humanity issuing in a more than equal tenderness toward my work. Of the speakers one and all, misguided as they have been, I say with Burns:

> "But yet the light that led astray
> Was light from heaven."

You cannot quite realize my pride and happiness in hearing my former teacher, Professor Palmer, speak about me as he has done to-night. When

I first met him, and during the year in which I was his pupil, I always met him with a Damascus blade in one hand and a laurel wreath in the other —and I never knew whether I was going up for coronation or decapitation! He was one of the two completely objective examiners I ever had, and till this evening I always felt that I deserved all that I got from Professor Palmer. I have a right also to say that the body of ideas which he brought before me, both by incomparable exposition and consistent criticism, has been with me for thirty-one years, the foundation of all my thinking and intellectual growth since. I have never had an opportunity till now to express to Professor Palmer my profound and affectionate thanks.

I cannot trust myself to thank Professor Bliss Perry for his golden words. I see in them less of a tribute to myself and more of a master's confession of the kinship between literature and religion, a confession too by one who is both man of letters and speaker of the transcendent influence upon human life of true words spoken with sincerity and simplicity and the pressure behind them of a noble character. In the light of his superb testimony we preachers see our calling with the halo encircling it that belongs to it by divine right. For this testimony we render Professor Perry our thanks and honor.

What shall I say in your name and my own to Doctor de Normandie for his noble greeting? He

has brought us an expression of the sympathy and good-will of our sister churches in Boston ; no man among us is better fitted for that function ; he is himself the embodiment of affectionate and chivalrous regard for his fellow-ministers and his fellow-Christians. I say to him, for myself and for you, that we are happier because of his presence with us, as the religious life of our city is richer because of the sincerity and purity of his spirit.

The next speaker represented the Old South Society. He must allow me to use him as a symbol of that society. Both Mr. Morse, the chairman of the standing committee, and Mr. Edward C. Johnson, the treasurer, represent in their devoted and able services the genius of the Old South Society. More than thirty years ago the Supreme Court of Massachusetts recognized that the trust of the Society was a trust ideally administered. From the beginning of my ministry here I have watched the administration of this trust with grateful admiration. By all the members of the standing committee and by members of the Society on many other committees time and service have been largely and freely given with no thought of compensation, from no other motive than pride and joy in the ever-extending good influence of the Society. It would be a painful embarrassment to me if I were not allowed at this time to express my thanks and my obligations to the Old South Society.

The ministry that has been so magnificently praised here this evening is not mine alone or mainly. For nearly eight years I have been supported by the assistant minister of the church, Dr. Allen E. Cross, a brilliant mind, a willing servant, a devoted friend; and during the present year I have had the noble help of the minister's assistant, Rev. Warren S. Archibald. No minister ever had more efficient officers than I have had; no minister to-day in the whole country owes more to his officers than I do to the six officers at present serving the Old South Church.

The work organized and carried forward by the women of the church is in itself a special distinction. Without that work we should be poor indeed; without it the merciful humanities of the church would languish, its devotional spirit would be distinctly less, and the social fellowship in which we rejoice would be greatly reduced. In the Old South Church from the beginning the women have played a noble part; their work has been hidden but none the less important, like the mainspring in the watch. For that hidden power, that modest but potent influence, that gentle but inspiring force, we return thanks and honor.

We have the Old South Club, from whose President we have heard this evening, a club numbering more than one hundred and seventy members, a club in full sympathy with the religious purpose of the church, and while pursuing

literary and social ends, reaching out in these days toward ends of social reform. We have a great parish, united, enthusiastic, seeking to serve this community, proud of a church two hundred and forty years old, with men and women happy to be in the church in which Benjamin Franklin was baptized, in which Samuel Adams was a communicant, in which the great voices of the Revolution rang; a church whose history more than that of any other in the city has been identified with the character, ideals, and hopes and patriotism of the community. These men and these women have helped mightily to produce this ministry, and I divide with them the honor of the evening.

Overestimation, undue devotion gives acute pain, therefore I give you, my people, back more than half of what you have given me. It belongs to you; besides, in dealing justly I give one substantial sign of retaining, what Judge Hammond hoped I might retain, a level head. Macaulay on one occasion said that he did not feel intoxicated by his success, but added the discreet remark that a man may be drunk and not know it. So far I am conscious of no intoxication, whether warranted in that feeling or not. I will tell you why I think I am immune. The theologians tell us there is such a thing as prevenient grace — which does not effect regeneration, but goes a good way toward it. Now I had my prevenient grace from an austere and noble father. When

I went forth to seek my livelihood, at the age of eleven, my father told me with such emphasis and sincerity as to leave in my mind no room for doubt, that I was below the average in ability and that my only salvation was in honest, steady work! And so deeply did his gospel go into my nature that when I went home from the meeting last Monday evening his words came back to me over the expanse of five and forty years with inexpressible tenderness and power. And that great meeting seemed to me a dream, wholly beautiful and wholly incredible! And yet a dream may serve a great purpose. A man certainly no better than I went out once on a long journey and came to a solitary place and laid himself down to sleep and dreamed a dream of a ladder which reached from the stone on which he laid his head to heaven. On that ladder the angels of God ascended and descended. He awoke and knew it was a dream, and yet he awoke with the feeling, new in him, of a great intention in his life, with the feeling that God was in that place, though he knew it not, and with the further feeling of awe and regret and hope — all in consequence of that dream!

And the dream in which I have been living, wholly beautiful, wholly incredible, for the last week — *dream* as it is — has given me a new sense of the intention of my existence, of its significance for my fellow-men; a new sense of God in the world — Immanuel — a new awe, a new regret,

a new hope! A little book was put into my hands last Monday afternoon which absolutely overwhelmed me. I refer not now to the gift — a gift in anticipation of the time, perhaps, when I can no longer earn my bread, a gift with a sweet and pious reference to the future, a gift with a religious beauty in it to which I can make no further reference now — but the Book itself with five hundred and fifty *names*, young men and maidens, old men and little children, and others under the burden and heat of the day, a Book that shall be an everlasting memorial, whose names shall be engraven on the tablets of my heart forever — a precious Volume, that, when the inevitable evening comes, shall be a gracious fulfillment of the promise, "At evening-time there shall be light"; that Book is part of the great dream in which I have been living and meeting God in the humanity of my people.

A minister lives for his generation. There have been fifteen ministers of the Old South preceding me. From Mr. Thatcher to my immediate predecessor, Dr. Manning, fifteen ministers have had their distinct congregations; and I love to think of them in that world of light whither they have gone, with those to whom they broke the "bread of life" here, surrounding them there, together, swelling the richness of that mysterious existence upon which they have entered. We are traveling the same path. Others will fill your

places and another will soon fill mine: but the richness of our fellowship is forever, and I open my life to your love and your confidence, and I give you back mine without limit, without bound!

Many warm hearts have wished me another twenty-five years of service here. I indulge in no sanguine hopes for the future. I should like to serve for a few years more if God will. For any minister even among the best of friends the Old South Church must be a great burden. I remember when I came to this country first I dropped into a safe factory and I worked with a good-natured Irishman, whose name was John (I never knew the other part of his name). John was always looking for a soft job. If there was a piece of iron to be lifted, I had to lift more than half every time. But he was good-natured and a good friend. I did not see him for thirteen years. After my settlement at the Old South Church I was walking down Boylston Street and saw him working in a doorway, and I said, "John, do you know me?" "Know you?"—I will not quote literally—"I would know you anywhere. Och! but it's a soft job you've got now!" That is the popular impression; I think a good many of my brethren have thought so. I would like as many of these men as might be to become my successors; that I think would lead them to a change of heart.

When I came to Boston Phillips Brooks was

preaching at the height of his power in Trinity Church; Dr. Duryea, a strong man, was in Central Church; Dr. Herrick, one of the most accomplished preachers our body ever had, was at Mt. Vernon Church; James Freeman Clarke, a preacher and a writer of national repute, was in the Church of the Disciples; Edward Everett Hale was in the South Church, Brook Hereford was the popular minister of Arlington Street Church, Henry Foote was the King's Chapel Saint, and other men not unworthy to be named with these filled other pulpits of the city; and I a stripling of thirty-one appeared among these sons of the prophets! Was it a soft job? I began my ministry in an environment charged with the intensest and noblest kind of hostility, that inspired by the fear lest evil might befall precious interests of the human spirit, and in this environment the task assigned me was called "a soft job." I never thought of it that way. I thought of it as stern duty, as holding more work than I could do if I had been as strong as Samson; I felt the grind year in and year out; I felt the isolation, almost desolation, with hardly a song bird to be heard anywhere, except the sweet voices of love and cheer that rang inside the Old South Church; and all that for ten hard and great years. I am thankful for them. I would go through them again to gain what they brought. They did me a world of good; they did much to shake

out the chaff from character, from faith, and from the objects of desire; they did much to increase within me the sense of what manhood is, life, service, God, and hope! This kind of warfare is great, but it inclines one who has been in it for twenty-five years to readiness to lay down the sword when the strength to wield it shall no longer remain. Against that day I hope I shall be ever in the watch tower.

And now, dear friends, I must not prolong these remarks. Let me thank the eminent men who have done us the honor to come hither as our guests. They have brought us inspiration, they have greatened our sense of self-respect. Let me thank again and from my heart the speakers for what they have said. I do not believe their description of me, but I receive their good-will and their love with utmost thanks.

Let me thank you one and all for this affecting expression of confidence and regard, let me continue to be your friend and servant as I can and as I may; let us together seek the fresh dedication of the Old South Church to the sovereign interests of this community, and let us look to God for a higher wisdom and a diviner spirit.

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